

Hansard 23 11 00

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to ensure the safety of all nuclear submarines following the damage to HMS Tireless.
[139681]

Mr. Spellar: Following inspections in HMS Tireless, the Ministry of Defence has carried out checks in all Royal Navy hunter-killer submarines. Defects similar to those found in Tireless, though at a much earlier stage of development, have been found in a further six submarines. A programme to address these defects is being drawn up. No submarine will return to sea unless it is safe for it to do so. Of the five submarines in which defects have not been detected, only HMS Triumph is currently available for operation duties because other vessels are in refit. Ministry of Defence safety authorities have approved her operation and she will be subjected to further regular inspections.

Vanguard Class ballistic missile submarines have a different design of reactor plant and Ministry of Defence safety authorities have endorsed their continued operation.